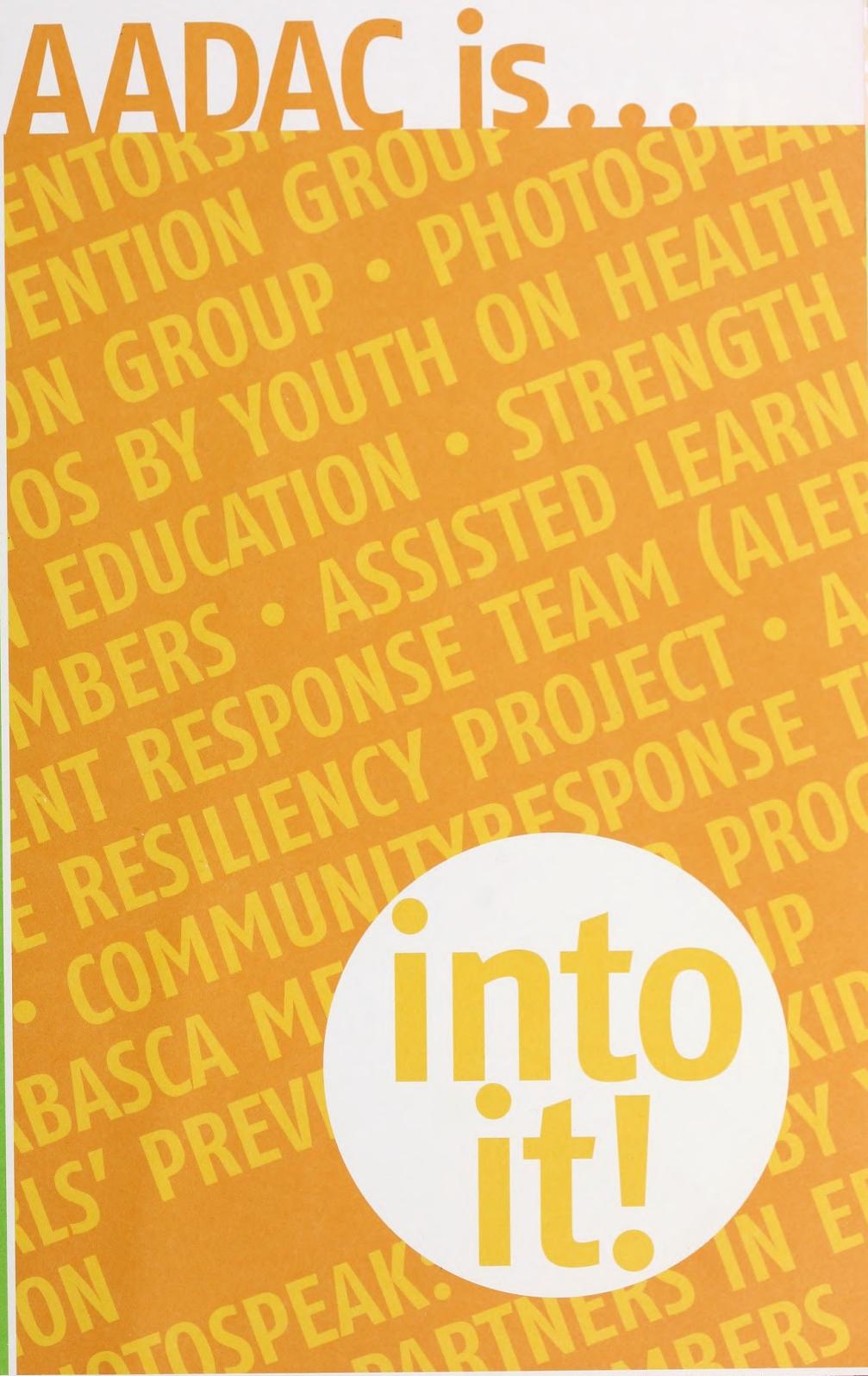


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The
2005
Youth
Project
Awards



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Information and Prevention

Athabasca Mentorship Program

AADAC Area Office, Athabasca

The Athabasca Mentorship Program (AMP) is a community-based program with partners representing AADAC, Alberta Children's Services, Aspen Regional Health Authority, Athabasca Teen Centre Society, Family and Community Support Services (FCSS), Landing Trail Intermediate School and Whispering Hills Primary School. The program encourages children to engage in one-to-one friendships with positive adult role models (mentors) in a school setting. Each year, all students in grades 3 and 4 are given a chance to apply for a mentor; pairings are based on shared skills, strengths and interests. Mentors spend one 40-minute lunch period a week with their students. During these times, mentors and students share activities such as games, sports, drawing, crafts, reading or just talking. The children, their families, mentors and AMP committee members meet twice a year for a celebration luncheon, during which focus group evaluations of the program are obtained. In addition, mentors attend quarterly networking sessions to share ideas and support one another throughout the school year. The program operates with a part-time co-ordinator funded by FCSS and the Athabasca Teen Centre.

THE RESULTS: The AMP draws on the strength of the community by using adult role models to help schoolchildren achieve social and academic success. Building resiliency in the children is made more likely because mentors are specially matched with children based on shared criteria. Because it is widely known that the AMP is open to all children in grades 3 and 4, children who participate are less likely to face stigmatization. The program has 11 mentors registered for the September 2005 school term, with another recruitment campaign set for January 2006. Past years have seen as many as 19 mentors working with children.

Girls' Prevention Group

AADAC Area Office, Camrose

The Girls' Prevention Group met weekly at the P.A.C.E. Outreach School from October 2004 to June 2005. The P.A.C.E. Outreach School is a partnership between Battle River School Division #31 and the Camrose Boys and Girls Club, and provides an alternative education for youth who have left the regular school system or have expressed difficulty with school. The Girls' Prevention Group provided information and support to the participants, all of whom were girls aged 14 to 18 who appeared at risk to be harmfully involved with alcohol and other drugs. Over the nine months the group operated, leaders were able to cover a wide range of topics including sexual health, male/female relationships, anger, communication, alcohol and other drugs, the impact of alcohol use on risky behaviour, family relationships, peer relationships and bullying. The sessions were structured to include crafts, experiential activities and field trips.

THE RESULTS: A core group of six dedicated girls attended over the entire nine months. They reported positively about their learning experiences. Participants took ownership of the group by setting the ground rules for the group and its atmosphere, proposing topics for discussion, and contributing food. The group meetings became an important source of support, information, and behaviour change with regard to bullying and risky activities.

Peer Discussion Group

AADAC Area Office, Grande Prairie

All junior and senior high school students attending the Bridge Network Outreach School are given the opportunity to participate in a twice-monthly Peer Discussion Group at the school. Youth who elect to join the group select and discuss topics of interest, including healthy communication and relationships, self-esteem, assertiveness, alcohol and other drugs, suicide, legalization of marijuana, and spirituality. Depending on the topic, guest speakers may be invited to make presentations to the group. A special highlight each year is a Christmas dinner provided by school and agency staff for the students. An AADAC Mobile Counsellor and a Mental Health Therapist facilitate the group.

THE RESULTS: The Bridge Network Outreach School, part of the Grande Prairie Public School District, offers education to over 200 students who cannot attend the regular school sites. Depending on the school calendar, 17 or 18 Peer Discussion Groups are held each year. Approximately 14 students attend each session on average, with a high percentage of regular attendees. The 2004/05 school year was a banner year for the program, with a total of 244 students attending the group—the highest recorded attendance in the group's five-year history. In addition, students from the group stepped forward and took on a leadership role, planning two special events, demonstrating a great deal of hard work, and setting and achieving several goals.



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DISCUSSION GROUPS • STRENGTHEN TEAM (ALERI) PARTNERS IN EDUCATION • STRENGTHEN RESPONSE TEAM (ALERI) COMMUNITY

PhotoSpeak: Photos by Youth on Health

AADAC Youth Services, Calgary



This project is a partnership between AADAC, the Calgary Health Region and Communities in Action with Children and Youth, a non-profit coalition supporting communities and individuals that work together to strengthen assets in children and youth. Eighteen young people from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds were selected to create photos and videos depicting experiences that add to or take away from their health. The participants created their own artwork, prepared material for the media, made presentations and planned the launch for their exhibit, which is currently circulating through schools and community groups in Calgary.

THE RESULTS: The PhotoSpeak project resulted in an improved understanding of youth health issues, helped youth feel empowered to make changes in their community, and enhanced the positive identity, values and social competency of the youth involved. Because many health and allied professionals viewed the exhibit, PhotoSpeak may have some impact on health programs and services in Alberta, particularly in Calgary. Educational materials created in conjunction with the exhibit, including a tool kit, booklet and manual, will be circulated to a variety of professionals to help educate young people about the broad definitions of health, and to inform community groups on how to facilitate their own youth PhotoSpeak projects.

Partners in Education

AADAC Area Office, Lethbridge

Although information about alcohol, tobacco, other drugs and gambling is required in the Alberta Education curriculum, teachers often feel they cannot adequately present the information, don't have the planning or class time for addictions information, or simply don't have the program materials. To help fulfill the Alberta Education curriculum objectives, six interns from the University of Lethbridge Addictions Studies Program were trained in the implementation of several AADAC school/teacher resources between December 2004 and April 2005. These interns then travelled to 12 schools and delivered the programs to 812 students in 34 classes.

THE RESULTS: The interns not only delivered the curriculum but were also able to develop relationships with students in these grades and provide a positive influence. Contacts were made with teachers to set up schedules and to conduct ongoing evaluation of the interns and the program.

Strength in Numbers

AADAC Area Office, Whitecourt

To counteract the negative and erroneous perception that most youth are using drugs, the Whitecourt Area Office and its partners, the students, teachers, and administrators of St. Joseph School, Percy Baxter Middle School and Hilltop High School, launched a "social norms" marketing campaign called "Strength in Numbers" in August 2004. Approximately 550 youth and 75 parents took part in the campaign, which began with a baseline study of tobacco, alcohol and marijuana use among youth. A University of Alberta analysis of the resulting data revealed (as expected) that the majority of youth do not use drugs. In January 2005, the analysis was distributed to teachers, parents and school boards, and a media campaign announcing the positive results of the survey began, involving informational posters, an interactive Microsoft PowerPoint presentation, and screensavers on the televisions in each school room. Radio spots and advertisements about some of the results of the survey were also placed in the local media.

THE RESULTS: The first year of the project established a baseline of use and non-use among youth in Whitecourt in grades 6 through 8. A brief follow-up survey was done with the students in June 2005 to determine how many of them remembered the social norm stats, and whether they remembered the posters. This type of social norm marketing campaign, when done effectively, helps to reinforce healthy behaviour among youth, without denying the concerns many people have about the inherent dangers of substance abuse by youth.

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Community Response Team

AADAC Youth Services, Edmonton and Cross-Sector Steering Committee

An interdisciplinary team that includes social workers, mental health nurses, and staff from Aboriginal agencies, the Community Response Team provides a crisis response service to young people under 18 years of age and their families. The service is consent-based and provides a co-ordinated community response for children and youth at risk, filling gaps in existing emergency and crisis services. In teams of two, the Community Response Team provides in-home assessment, follow-up, and referral for families in crisis. Two 24-hour respite beds for youth are available through the service, which operates seven days a week in Edmonton.

THE RESULTS: The Community Response Team is a comprehensive service that best meets the needs of the diverse group of clients in this large urban centre. Families are ensured fast support in a crisis and timely referral to appropriate treatment at AADAC. Because of the multi-agency makeup of the team, skills are exchanged between team members, any specific cultural needs of clients can be addressed, and partnerships to address concurrent disorders in addiction and mental health have been strengthened. As a result of its participation in the project, AADAC Youth Services now has access to on-site assessment and support when a mental health crisis occurs in an addiction setting.

Next Steps

Learn more!

If you would like to know more about any of these projects, please visit the database on Unity.

AADAC

Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission
An Agency of the Government of Alberta

For more information, contact your local AADAC office,
call 1-866-33AADAC or visit our website at www.aadac.com